



I BECAME suddenly conscious of a sigh in the room, then of some sort of action, and finally of a small voice saying, "*Arigato, ejinsan!*"

Looking, then, above, I saw that the legs of the Japanese doll, which was fastened by a string to the chandelier, were kicking abandonedly, and that it was from the small effigy the voice proceeded.

"Well!" cried I in amazement.

"If you please an' mek me loose," the small voice went on, "I honorably talk with you."

I hastily cut the doll from her string and disposed her on the carriage of the typewriter.

"Tha's more nizer as hang," sighed she, rubbing her neck, clearing her voice, and wiping away the dust of the years with a tiny paper handkerchief from her sleeve.

"But what does all this mean?" I demanded with some severity. "You have hung up there for years, and I have not heard a word from you. And now suddenly—"

"Excuse that I augustly interrupt," smiled the toy. "Bad manner. Onderstan'. Jus' girl annyhow. Girl got to be not seen, not hear'. Not vote, not swear. But jus' got liddle time for talk. An' never talk 'fore. Don' know how soon you git bag at those mezz-ziz—what is other end?"

I reflected. "Pessimism?" I hazarded then.

"More bedder," nodded the doll. "You' honorable fault no can spell, say word back end. Learn all word from you. Explain. Got be shot up an' hang up soon's you git those mezz—"

"Yes, yes," I laughed.

"Introduce: Name Marubushu-San. What you thing?"

"A most inappropriate name," said I. "You are nothing like a lemon."

"Thangs!" said Miss Lemon. "Thing those long time an' be happiness. Then can talk. Soon's you gittin' mezz—"

"Pessimistic."

"Then I done for an' got hang," nodded the doll. "Tha's why kin talk today, 'count you suddenly thing all good of all thing. Not bad thing inside!"

"But," cried I in dismay, "do you imagine that this is the first time I have thought nothing but good of everything?"

"Firs' time I ketch you," nodded the doll.

"But," argued I, "it is Christmas Eve. There is no pessimism in all the world tonight. And surely on other Christmas Eves—"

"Firs' time ketch," repeated Miss Lemon decisively.

"Well," I went on lamely, "it has been an unusually difficult year for me. Friends have misunderstood me, enemies have triumphed over me, illness has stalked before me, the Wolf has looked in through the window—nay, the door! But tonight I fancy a wonderful purpose in it all. It is the bitter draft which one takes to mend some desperate illness. I know not where my spirit has been ill. But this I know: It has been helped—perhaps, indeed, healed—by these fierce medications. Like cures like. So bitterness has healed bitterness. That is why you find me on this Christmas Eve, as you are good enough to put it, thinking all good of all things."

"How those are mos' bes' nize!" said the doll softly, reaching the tiny hands toward me in benison. "Pity is firs' time. Bedder all time. Then naever need no med-ica-tion. But those is imposs'ble eggspeg. Jus' when no one is loog or thing the ingwas—you know what is ingwa?"

"Oh, yes," said I. "They are the little demons who pass through the pores of the body, with drawn swords, and vex the spirit until it becomes—"

"Honorable mezz-ziz—" nodded the doll wisely. "Mos' alway while I hang is army of ingwa sit upon your forehead to rush through an' stick the soul soon's you gittin' mezz-ziz—*Gomen nasai*, dear *ejinsan*. Don' lig for hurt your feelin'," bowed Miss Lemon politely. "But mebbys if you know they waitin' on your forehead you laugh, big loud laugh. Tha's lig grapeshot to ingwa—large laugh. They fall down dade right on your front! Oh, sometime you that near I gittin' all r'ady for speag. You that near, *ejinsan!*"

Miss Lemon brought her microscopic fore fingers within an inch of each other—as well as of my nose.

"Thank you!" laughed I.

"But, then come the mezz-ziz—an' I got shot op an' hang."

"Ah!" sighed I.

MARUBUSHU-SAN

By JOHN LUTHER LONG



Drawing by C. D. Weidon

"Oh, no ingwa come roun' you now!" cheered the doll hastily. "Laugh, quick!"

I did.

"Ah, ingwa gone! Fall down dade!"

"Then, I see, Miss Lemon," chided I, "that once in awhile you descend to subterfuge to—ahem!—stay the ingwas!"

"Tha's time you ketch me," laughed Miss Lemon gleefully. Then she resumed her gravity. "Certainlee I hang an' see you write sweet thing, noble thing, bloody thing. But always has somebody got be hurted in the writes account those make other bedder. But for why? To make some bad don' make other goo-od. Hurt some don' heal other."

"It is lig," sighed I.

"No," shook little Miss Lemon, "it is a foolishness. People been tole so, till they thing so. An' the

writes is more than anything elze 'sponsible. What you thing? Wait!" cried Miss Lemon, as I began ponderously to speak. "Me? I duu'no what you gon say. But you pull those eye together lig' it gon be mezz-ziz—then I got be hang op an' shot op. No one can stan' the mezz-ziz—"

"Well," laughed I, "I am not ready either to hang you up or shut you up!"

"How that are nize!" breathed Miss Lemon ecstatically. "You perfec' gentleman, I perfec' lady—what you thing?"

"Precisely!" agreed I. "Now how can we prevent the recurrence of my pessimism and its direful results?"

"Jus' lig I tellin' you those liddle while ago—laugh, *ejinsan*."

"All right. Even when alone I will laugh."

I did so. I was very happy. It pleased Miss Lemon tremendously. But she had an access of thought.

"The mezz-ziz—come sudden. Jus' lig' the laugh. No time 'range 'bout the hang op. Got tell you now. Las' will an' testamen'. Till further notiz. Don' bother 'bout neck. Those hard. But feelin' sof'. Don' lig' be put in stove or on ashpile. Some peoples crite 'nough for those. But you goin' be that kine with me, *ejinsan*?"

"You shall always be my best beloved!" cried I.

"Ah!" sighed Miss Lemon in ecstasy. "Then, dear barbarian, I break my bones to you! An' proceed with those former languages 'bout mezz-ziz—"

"Well," argued I, "you know, to resume our discussion that we fictionists are expected to write of what we think, at least, is life,—to hold the mirror up to nature. And life, you know, is neither altogether sad nor altogether gay, but just—well—life. How can we be happy about a thing that is not happy, which is, in fact, pessimistic?"

"But suppose you are a fool, jus' lig' you fool other peoples, an' thing life is what it is not?"

"Don't I see it all about me? Don't I live it myself?"

"But mebbys lig' it made for you by some other foolishness?"

"Certainly not!" said I severely. "I live it as it is!"

"Loog out!" shrieked Miss Lemon in terror. "I not r'ady for hang-op. Please, Barbarian! You say I'm perfec' lady. An' perfec' lady jus' got talk! An' recomce! it is firs' time I aever converse!"

"I'll remember," laughed I. "It would be easy if you sat just there on the carrier of my typewriter always."

"But alway I hang!" mourned Miss Lemon. "An' if you lig' me alway you can have me! It's up with you."

"I understand," said I, "and I shall often have you, never fear. But now, before I do something to hang you, tell me how to throttle this pessimism of a stiff-necked author. What is this life he thinks he knows, and you evidently think he does not?"

"Oh, Barbarian Scribbler, this is life, jus' you an' now! Jus' that sweetness of you! Be alway so! Then alway I sit here an' laugh—yes, an' cry—with you. When the thoughts an' the writes are lig' those other, you do not touch the long, long garment of the Lord of Life, you do not hear its frou, you do not know the fragrance of it. Scribbler, it is 'bout death you see an' know an' write of. This liddle death which precedes the life that will blot out the universe with jus' you. That large! Hal! Thing 'bout those! Write 'bout those! Not the bukkon on your sandal. Not even the smile of your beloved; nor the thrill of her agony, nor the tear of her sorrow. Sometime life come to you in dream, an' nex' day you put it away an' shame' to speak of it 'count you thing it errazy. But, where are you when you sleep, dear barbarian? On earth you are dade—dade as can be. But you are 'live somewhere? Well, where is it? What are those you see an' hear? *Ejinsan*, you jus' one liddle bit Eternal Live. "An' when you die each night—listen, sweet *ejinsan*!—when you die each night you make a visit back home. You meet the other atomes of eternal life! The rest of the family! Write of those, *ejinsan*!"

"They would put me into a lunatic asylum!"

At once Miss Lemon's two small hands were left in the air where my pessimism had caught their gesture.

"Wait!" cried I. "I won't—I swear I won't—"

The limbs of Miss Lemon twitched, a murmur tried to rise in her throat; but all was useless. I put the two hands down at her side, straightened out her legs, and returned Miss Lemon to her string.

"Nevertheless," said I to her, "we shall talk again—often! *Arigato! Gomen nasai!*"

Possibly I slept then; for I opened my eyes upon a beam of the risen Christmas sun shot straight into them.